



ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

February 4, 2024

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Secretary's Report

Annual Congregation Meeting

February 5, 2023

Lunch was provided, courtesy of a congregational donation and was hosted by Vicki Elfers, Debbie DeMarchis and our Latino members. We thank them for the delicious food and the care in providing it to us.

A welcoming devotion was offered by **Pastor Flora**, with a theme of Valentine's Day.

After the devotion, **Lisa Perreira**, Church Council President, called the meeting to order at 12:23 PM. Lisa greeted everyone and thanked everyone for attending.

Lisa announced the Business Meeting is now open and we had enough members present at the meeting and we exceeded our quorum.

Review of Meeting Ground Rules: (reviewed by Lisa)

These additional rules will be in effect for this meeting:

1. Our Parliamentarian is **Russ Bliss**. He will help us with any procedural questions for the meeting.
2. All confirmed members should have signed in on the attendance sheets located at each table and received two ballot forms for use during the meeting. Lisa then reviewed the definition of a member in good standing.
3. When the floor is open for discussion, please wait to be recognized by the President. We will have a microphone brought over to you. Please use the microphone and state your name. **Russ Bliss** will be our timekeeper as a speaker has the floor for up to three minutes. If the speaker has additional comments after his/her three minutes, he/she will need to wait until all other speakers are recognized before speaking again.
4. Typically, our voting will take place by a show of hands. If there is not a clear decision by a show of hands, we may need to do a paper ballot.

Secretary's Report: Submitted by Erica Barr

The Secretary's Report of the Annual Congregational Meeting from February 6, 2022 was presented. A motion was made to accept the Secretary's Report by **Tom Tresselt** and seconded by **Russ Bliss**. The motion passed unanimously.

Pastors' Reports were submitted by Pastors Lathrop, Hartford and Avila

Pastor Justin spoke to call our attention to how unique and special the unity between our English and Spanish speaking congregations is. We are among the VERY few Lutheran churches in North America that has been able to achieve this with any real success; and we are going SEVENTEEN years STRONG. Ascension Lutheran is the one and only church east of the Mississippi that has been

able to accomplish this. We are all so proud! He thanked the congregation for their continued love and support.

Pastor Flora spoke about her passion in leading the adult ministries within Ascension. She, too, thanked the congregation for their continued love and support.

Pastor Patty spoke to appreciate the great union that we have achieved between the 2 ministries. The efforts go way back to 2006, and have gotten better and stronger each year since. Covid hit the Latino community so very hard, but she took that challenge and approached it in a way where it brought us all together, growing together and working hard towards the same goals. And Pastor Patty, as well, thanked the congregation for their continued love and support.

We are all so blessed to be here at Ascension Lutheran.

Treasurer's Report: Submitted by Rich Germann

Rich Germann Reviewed the Treasurer's annual report for the year ending December 31, 2022. Please see attached, detailed finance reports and comments.

A motion was made by **Russ Bliss** to accept the 2022 Treasurer's Report. **John Scheid** seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports:

The Chairperson/Leader of the Committees were recognized when their committee was called and we asked the Congregation if they had any questions on the reports provided, as that the Chairperson/Leader would answer any questions.

Children and Family Ministries – Erin Shanley, Director
Youth Ministry – Jean Belcher, Director; Erica Barr, Chairperson
Finance Committee – Rich Germann, Treasurer and Chairperson
Latino Ministry Committee – Pastor Patty, Director; Ana Rihani, Chairperson
Personnel Committee – Lisa Perreira, President
Preschool – AnnMarie Achatz, Director
Property Committee – John Scheid, Chairperson
Social Ministry Committee –Cathy Adee, Chairperson
Stephen Ministry –Deacon Vicki Elfers
Worship and Music Committee – Tom Tresselt, Chairperson
Stewardship – Marie Mark, Chairperson
WELCA – Madeline Sharrock, Chairperson

A few notes from the committee reports:

Most committees were able to meet IN PERSON for most of the year. Thanks to our growth and adaptations that we implemented during Covid, they were also able to accommodate Zoom attendance for these committees as well this year.

2022 Proposed Budget: Submitted by Rich Germann:

Rich Germann reviewed the proposed budget for 2023 (detailed reports are attached) with a \$14K deficit. Rich went through several of the line items included in the budget. The SYNOD recommended a cost of living increase of 3.7% which has been given to each of our employees. No praise band has been budgeted as it was covered by direct donations. The drastic increases in overhead (fuel, insurance, etc), have impacted us all. All numbers have been factored in conservatively. Hopefully more outside groups will return and will increase our income as well. Lastly, preschool tuition will see a slight increase this year as well.

Questions that were asked regarding the budget:

Bob Synder – I believe that we should be proposing a balanced budget. How do you propose to balance the budget this year?

Rich Germann – We hope that our contributions increase as they have, consistently, in the years past. We also have investments that we have been moving around to help accrue as much as we can.

Ianina Wentwick Veisman – Is there an increase being made at all to the Latino ministry?

Rich Germann – The amount for Latino ministry is the amount that the Synod pays for Pastor Patty's salary, so that's why that hasn't changed.

John Howard – If we pass the budget now, can we have an amended budget down the line, if we are able to find other ways to make ends meet?

Rich Germann – It won't necessarily be amended, but the finance committee will certainly make allowances/redistribute as circumstances change through the year.

Pat Massaro – Have you looked into paying the mortgage biweekly as it will lower the interest rate, but keep the payment amounts the same?

Rich Germann – Not yet, but we are certainly open to that and willing to implement it if it will help us save money.

Pastor Patty – The Latino steering committee has agreed to donate \$5,000 to help towards balancing the budget.

Congregation – This generosity was met with a standing ovation!

Bob Synder – I will donate \$1,000 towards the budget deficit as well.

Congregation – This generosity was met with a standing ovation!

John Scheid – Many companies will match charitable donations, so if we can all look into that possibility, it could also help us to get ahead.

Rich Germann – After those donations, our new deficit is \$8K, or 1%

Pastor Justin – We just got an anonymous donation for \$8K, to cover and BALANCE the budget!

Congregation – This generosity was met with a roaring standing ovation!

A motion was made by **Owen Young** to accept the treasurer's report. **Bob Synder** seconded. Motion was passed excitedly and unanimously.

Elections of Church Council

The following members have been nominated to serve on Church Council:

For a first two year term:

Kelly Reno – Chairperson of Youth Committee

Lois Lehr – Chairperson of Children and Family

Motion was made to accept these nominations by **Russ Bliss**; it was seconded by **Jean Belcher**, and it was passed unanimously.

For a one year term:

Janet Anderson – Chairperson of Finance Committee

Ana Rihani – Latino Ministry Representative

Pat Massaro – Chairperson of WELCA

Motion was made to accept these nominations by **Bruce Borg**; it was seconded by **Cathy Borg**, and it was passed unanimously.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

There were 2 candidates to be called to positions as Synodical Deacons – Susan Bliss and Vicki Elfers. The motion to renew their calls was made by **Debbie DeMarchis**, seconded by **Eric Bertram** and passed unanimously.

Proposed Candidates for attending the Synod Assembly:

Janet Anderson, Susan Bliss, Vicki Elfers and Pattie Komornik

Pattie offered to be a non-voting representative, as only 3 can attend

Motion was made by **Glenn Perriera** to accept these representatives; it was seconded by **Cathy Borg** and passed unanimously.

Motion was made for the church to pay for Pattie to go on her own, as a non-voting member/visitor (approximately \$250) by **Tom Tresselt**; it was seconded by **Jean Belcher** and was passed unanimously.

In response, a donation was made to cover the costs for Pattie Komornik to attend the Synod Assembly. This generosity too, was met with congregational appreciation.

Resolutions:

Thanks to:

Members who have completed their terms on council: Tom Tresselt, Jean Belcher, Lisa Perriera and Rich Germann

Special thanks were given to Lisa Perriera for being such a strong leader in the face of Covid, where no one knew how to handle anything! She led us with grace and faith and helped us to be a beacon for those that needed us the most. Thank you Lisa!

Special thanks were also given to Rich Germann for serving as Treasurer at Ascension for the past TWENTY SEVEN YEARS!!! What a tremendous and immeasurable blessing he has been to our entire community. His faithful dedication to God, to Ascension and to this Ministry have been paramount to our historical and continued successes. Rich, thank you so very much!

Members of the Church staff.

Members of the Preschool staff.

Members of the Ascension Day Camp staff.

The volunteers who serve Ascension.

To Thrivent Financial and our many members who applied for and donated Action Team cards to assist our ministries.

Our Pastoral staff.

The resolutions were accepted with a round of applause.

The Council left to vote for new Executive members and returned with the following results:

Executive Committee Election Results:

President: Erica Barr

Vice President: Madeline Scharrock

Secretary: Stephanie Holdcroft

A motion was made to close the meeting by **Pattie Komornik** and seconded by **Jean Belcher**. Motion was passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Erica Barr
Church Council Secretary

Senior Pastor's Report

Annual Report of Pastor Justin Lathrop

Dear Friends in Christ,

2023 was another year full of lessons and accomplishments for Ascension. First and foremost, this was a year of leadership transition. We tearfully bid farewell to our beloved Pastor Flora, wishing her and Don the best in retirement. We then underwent a period of reflection and discernment. Under the guidance of Holy Cow Consulting and direction of the Synod, we learned more about who Ascension is and what is needed for the future. A special thank you to all who participated in the process. That led us to create a new position of Lay Assistant to the Pastor, which will be ably filled by our own Vicki Elfers. Vicki brings experience, training, skills and faithfulness that will serve Ascension for years to come. I look forward to partnering with her and Pastor Patty in leading our congregation into its bright future. Together we team with an amazing staff and group of volunteers to continue to care for our community.

Worship has always been a key part of our life together. Ascension continues to provide a variety of expressions in order to speak to our diverse population. We offer varying musical styles, bilingual opportunities, and incorporate projection and online streaming to better transmit the Gospel to a broad spectrum of God's children. In 2023, we adapted our summer and Christmas Eve services to best reflect our congregation. I am happy to share that in both instances we saw increased attendance, energy, and quality that I'm sure was felt by all. Our overall attendance for the year remained steady amid a world of declining church participation.

I enjoy being part of the milestones of faith at Ascension and am blessed to journey with people at various points of their faith life. From baptism to 1st Bibles, communion to confirmation classes and camps; at preschool chapel, children's messages "in a bucket," youth activities and a host of other activities, I so enjoy seeing the Spirit alive in our young. When I lead Bible study or attend regular meetings (like Forever 50) and special events (like Rally Day) I see that same Spirit alive in our adults as well.

I have been blessed with the opportunity and responsibility to represent Ascension to the wider church as well. I continue to serve on the Candidacy Committee and as Secretary for the Western Suffolk Conference Ministerium. I also worked on the Synod's Consultation Committee, which serves as a mediator for

congregations in crisis. In particular, I was invited to lead a retreat for those exploring ordained ministry. A large part of that representation has been through our Latino Ministry. Ascension is now seen as a national model and has been repeatedly asked to teach others seeking to follow our path. Pastor Patty and I have given several presentations throughout the year and recently attended training at the EPES school in Santiago, Chile. The cooperative community we have developed is seen as a beacon of hope for the ELCA.

2023 was not without challenges. We were met with financial strains throughout the year. I am so grateful to our staff, council, finance, and stewardship committees for their faithful leadership. It was through their hard work and determination that we not only weathered the storm but positioned ourselves in the best possible way for the future. Challenges remain, but I am certain we will emerge as strong as ever.

As always, I am so grateful for your support throughout our ministry together. I am so very grateful that God has placed me among Ascension. I am so excited to see what 2024 has in store. As a community, we continue to be welcoming to all, growing in faith, and serving together.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Justin

Mission Developer's Report

MISION LATINA DE ASCENSION

2023 Report

By Mission Developer Rev. Evelyn Patricia Avila

- Sunday worship:** attendance (in person) has been consistent in 2023 averaging 65 to 75 adults and children, and 10-15 attendees by ZOOM per service.
- Ministries:** Prayer Group Mondays at 7:00 pm led by Congregational Deacon Ana Rihani, gathered by ZOOM with an average attendance of 10-15 people.
Prayer Group: Tuesdays at 10:30 am by Zoom led by lay leaders Berta Garcia and Jackeline Rojas with an average attendance of 10-15 people weekly.
In person Prayer Service: Every first Monday of the month at 7:30 pm led by Mission Developer and Congregational Deacon Ana Rihani in the chapel at 7:30 pm with an average attendance of 25 people in person and about 15 on ZOOM.
Discipleship classes: Wednesday at 7:00 pm by Zoom led by Mission Developer with an average attendance of 12-15 people weekly.
Bible Study: Thursdays at 7:30 pm by Zoom led by Leo Avila by Zoom with an average attendance of 15-20 people.
Healing Service: Every first Sunday of the month, led by Mission Developer and Congregational Deacons.
- Pastoral office hours** for the Latino community Tuesdays from 3pm to 7:00pm and Thursdays from 11am to 7:00 pm.
- Home visitation**, outreach and Koinonia: Every Sunday afternoon after Sunday service.
- SAWC – Mision Latina de Ascension, ELCA trainings and workshops 2023:**
Mission Developer participated in the Mission Developer's training held in October at the ELCA Center in Chicago, IL along with Pastor Justin Lathrop.
Mission Developer participated in the training for Pastors and Lay leaders "Academia Ecumenica de Liderazgo" - Ecumenical Leadership Academy- facilitated by the ELCA in the months of October and November. This is a tool given to all multicultural ministries of the ELCA and Episcopal Churches to build new leadership within the ministry.
Mission Developer is part of the Metropolitan New York Synod Council and participated in their meetings during 2023.

Mission Developer is part of the Metropolitan New York Synod Executive Committee and participated in their 2023 meetings.

Mission Developer is part of the MNYS Candidacy Committee and participates in their meetings throughout the year.

Mission Developer is part of the board of directors of the Lutheran Counseling Services and participates in their meetings throughout the year.

Mission Developer is part of the Western Suffolk Conference of Pastors and participates in their monthly Ministerium, annual retreat, and other gatherings throughout the year.

6. 2023 celebrations and outreach

- Three kings' day celebration in January 2023
- Day of Friendship in February 2023
- Lenten retreat and "Viacrusis" (14 Stations of the Cross) March 2023
- Mother's Day celebration in May 2023
- Father's Day celebration in June 2023
- Summer retreat and adult camping in August 2023
- Rally Day celebration in September 2023
- Hispanic Heritage Celebration in October 2023
- Thanksgiving potluck dinner in November 2023
- Posadas and "Pastorela" in December 2023

7. Special worship services:

- 4 children and 2 adult Baptisms during 2023
- 2 youth and 3 adults "Affirmation of Faith" in the month of October 2023
- One "Quinceañera" service and celebration in the month of June 2023

8. New Ministries:

- In collaboration with Ascension's Sunday School program, we opened a second Sunday School hour in October for children attending Servicio en Espanol at 12:00 pm. This program is led by volunteers.
- Partnership with "Fundación Caricatura" a non-profit organization dedicated to the accompaniment and empowerment of artists with disabilities. (Especially immigrant's artists). With our partnership throughout the year were able to provide financial help, moral and spiritual support to immigrant families in need residing in Long Island, NY and El Salvador, Central America.

TREASURER'S REPORT

**ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH
TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

<u>REVENUE</u>	<u>2023 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2023 BUDGET</u>
Contributions	403,467.62	409,000.00
Special Offerings	15,311.59	25,000.00
Other Income	105,407.36	80,216.00
Pre-School Tuition Income	<u>239,956.10</u>	<u>260,000.00</u>
TOTAL REVENUE	764,142.67	774,216.00

EXPENSES

Pastoral Ministry	177,099.00	201,195.84
Latino Ministry	12,500.00	15,300.00
Worship	48,192.46	48,471.02
Administration	118,854.44	121,484.66
Program	46,243.31	50,860.00
Property	49,687.79	53,400.00
Benevolence (Synod)	22,124.97	29,000.00
Insurance	37,580.50	32,500.00
Lutheran High School	0.00	900.00
Pre-School	199,147.28	200,000.00
Debt Reduction	<u>25,887.55</u>	<u>21,232.42</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	737,317.30	774,343.94
NET INCOME	26,825.37	(127.94)

DEDICATED FUND BALANCES

Confirmation Robes	1,035.26
Latino Pastor's Fund	4,096.67
Latino Ministry Fund	3,237.41
Confirmation Camp	6,951.99
Tanzania Mission Fund	1,105.00
Ascension Day Camp	2,221.12
Flower Fund	1,353.57
Coffee Hour Fund	2,473.99
Remembrance Fund	2,800.33
Hunger Outreach	6,185.33
Others	3,114.20
TOTAL DEDICATED FUNDS	34,574.87

CASH ON HAND 23,152.74

INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS

BOND FUNDS(THRIVENT)

Money Market 13,742.43
House Fund(Thrivent) 15,612.41
LTD Thrivent Bond Fund 34,011.08

MUTUAL FUNDS

Victory Funds(RS Large Cap Fund) 27,987.23
Invesco 55,489.85

TOTAL VALUE OF INVESTMENTS 146,843.00

ASCENSION ENDOWMENT FUND 35,086.99

MORTGAGE

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
Outstanding Principle: 299,774.85
Interest Rate (Fixed): 4.5%
Maturity Date: 11/1/2034

SPECIAL NEED MONTHLY ENVELOPE 2023

January	Mercy Inn, Wyandanch	595.69
February	Trinity Lutheran church, Wyandanch	668.00
March	Lutheran Disaster Response – Ukraine	793.00
April	Momma’s House	425.00
May	LI Youth Mentoring	456.00
June	Confirmation Camp	535.00
July	Synodical Benevolence	228.00
August	Lutheran Counseling Center	376.00
September	National Youth Gathering	465.00
October	Latino Family in Need	883.00
November	LUHI	536.00
December	Emergency Assistance Fund	<u>804.00</u>
	TOTAL SPECIAL NEED RECEIVED FOR 2023	6,764.69

Audit Committee

September 12, 2023

We have conducted our audit of the financial records of Ascension Evangelical Lutheran Church. We focused primarily on the two-month period beginning April 1, 2023 and ending May 31, 2023. We conducted several tests to the system of internal controls and found some exceptions.

We find that the church records are in order and found the following exceptions or omissions.

- The use of the four eye accounting method is currently not being used and recommend the following steps be taken to improve the oversight of income and expense be implemented.
- All contributions from Sunday worship services need to be stored in a secure location such as a safe.
- Counting of all contributions from Sunday services be counted by 2 persons and signed by both persons.
- All deposits to the bank are to be counted and verified by 2 persons.
- Pre-school tuition payments should be counted and signed off by 2 persons.
- All payment requested should be signed off by an authorized member of staff preferably the pastor or office manager before payment.
- Descriptions on payment requests should be clear.
- In attempting to audit the Summer Day Camp Program we determined that the program leaders did not have a realistic budget in place when hiring staff. It also appears that there was no oversight or training for this program. In moving forward the program will need some additional direction to be successful in the future.
- The finance committee needs to oversee all bank accounts and signers at least once per calendar year.

As this committee did not audit the Pre-school/Payroll programs at this time we will reconvene in late December 2023 - January 2024 to conduct the audit on those areas and to validate the process of implementing recommendations from this audit.

Respectfully submitted by, The Audit Committee
Russell Bliss Chair, Richard Germann, and Richard Monsky

Children and Family Ministries

Annual Report Children and Family Ministry 2023

(Maternity Leave January 2023-April 2023)

May- Communion classes took place with a total of 4 students receiving Communion on June 4th. We began using *Sermons4kids* as our main curriculum. Baptismal gift baskets started to be distributed (First Bibles and knitted blankets). Baptism of Brooklyn Everly Vail. Baptism of Chloe Lynn Charney

June- Sunday school ended on June 11th. Parents Night out event took place Friday June 9th- Summer/smores themed -chaperoned by Pastor and myself, 11 students attended. Baptism of Nolan Alexander Gerrie. Baptism of Noelle Marie Neuner

July - Summer Sunday school began July 9th, the students worked on a mural for the upstairs classroom. Between 5 and 10 students attended weekly. ** must rethink this for next year as we need more than one adult each week logistically**. Baptism of Own Zachary Attard, Rae Julliette Appenzeller, Jack William Appenzeller, Wyatt John Gallagher, Madison Elizabeth Hurd.

August- Summer Sunday school ran through August 27th. Sunday school registration was opened both in person and online. Communion registration letters and information were sent to 20 5th grade students in the database, a new Sunday school attendance requirement was added.

September-Rally Day and the opening day of Sunday School took place on September 17th We met in the community room for crafts followed by a banner parade through the sanctuary. We had 17 students in attendance(lower than last year)

October- Christian Ed committee has been formed and began meeting monthly. Postcards inviting all the 3rd graders to a special bible blessing were sent out. Pumpkin decorating event was scheduled but cancelled due to low enrollment. Baptism of Maximus William Fiore, Trevor Adien and Chase Landon Jones, Bryson Khalil Bannister.

November- 3rd grade bible and decorating took place November 5th and 12th. Upper elementary students began focusing on Martin Luther's Little Catechism as a curriculum guide. Pray and Praise took place November 5th. Family event was The Amani Children's Choir from Uganda, which was well attended. Advent Festival info given to the congregation and ticket sales began. Baptism of Lois Richard German, and Anthony Gaetano Giuliani.

December- Advent Festival- December 17th- 115 guests . Sunday School concert December 17th. No Sunday school December 24th- December 31. Baptism of Narya Ororo Hamilton

Comments/highlights: Sunday school continues to grow and we currently have 33 students enrolled and attending regularly. The Advent festival drew over 115 guests and was very successful. Getting the 5th graders who are set to make Communion registered and involved in programming is a continuing struggle. Pray and Praise is back as well as Baptismal gifts to engage the younger non-school aged children and their families.

Goals: Continue to cultivate the Sunday school program, add an additional 2 teachers, regular aids and establish a 1st-2nd class. Expand the family events offered monthly to include a larger variety of family friendly events. Have the 5th graders achieve objectives of their faith based learning moving into Communion and Confirmation. Find innovative ways to engage the older elementary students. Submitted by Erin Shanley

This past year was a slow start but had a very positive feeling throughout the year. While Erin Fiore was out on maternity, Ali Johnson and I were able to take the lead with Sunday School until her return in mid-April. In Erin's absence, we held a successful Eggstravaganza with the help of Cathy Adee and

Yenny Estridge from Misa. The many successes throughout the year also stem from Erin Fiore's leadership as well, so please reference her report as well. At this time I would also like to thank those members on the committee Pastor Justin, Erin Fiore, Ali Johnson, Jillian Germann, Trisha Georghiou, and Laura Auciello. We meet one Sunday a month after the 10:30 service in the youth house. Anyone who would like to join us please let us know and we will let you know when our next meeting will be.
- Lois Lehr

Finance Committee

2023 Finance Committee Annual Report

2023 has continued to be a challenge to manage our Church's finances.

Income did not meet budgeted expectations this year falling behind just shy of \$10,000. We had to withdraw \$56,000 from our investment accounts to cover bills due to periodic problems with cash flow. However, expenses were under budget by roughly \$37,000 so we did end the year with a net income of nearly \$27,000.

Below are some items worth highlighting for 2023:

- The cost to convert the furnace to gas totaled approximately \$15,000. That expense was kept to a minimum thanks to the hard work of our property committee and some of the cost was offset by our generous congregation.
- Preschool contributed a net income of \$40,809 and other outside groups contributed almost \$19,000.

The Finance committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis to review the financial condition of Ascension and discuss the best way to manage our resources. Our committee members are Pastor Lathrop, Pastor Krahn, Rich Germann, Russell Bliss, Heidi Manzo, Cathy Borg, Pattie Komornik, Erica Barr, John Howard and myself.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Anderson, Finance Chair and Treasurer

Forever 50

Our mighty and faithful seniors gather weekly on Wednesdays at 12 noon for our Forever 50 meetings. Each week the group gathers for fellowship, games, parties and attending plays.

In 2023 they acquired Epiphany Gifts by taking one, grabbing one or stealing one; had a Hawaiian Luau; celebrated Chinese New Year and St Patrick's Day with a catered luncheons; saw plays at CMPAC which included "A Chorus Line", "The Sound of Music", "The Prom"; played games like Bingo and Left, Right, Center; had a Spring Luncheon at the Irish Coffee Pub; went to the Sight and Sound Theater in Lancaster PA to see "Moses".

This group was formed by Pastor Flora and with her husband Don they provided many years of wonderful activities. They will both be greatly missed!! And we wish them well.

As we began again in September, after taking the summer off, we looked to continue the fun. We went to CMPAC to see "Into the Woods" and "Young Frankenstein"; had an ice cream social; played games; had a few sing-a-longs; had our traditional Halloween Party and our Thanksgiving catered luncheon; did a Christmas Craft with Janet Germann and finished December with the ever-popular Christmas Luncheon at the Irish Coffee Pub.

As we look to 2024, I am grateful for the leadership provided by our newly formed Forever 50 committee, Pat Massaro, Joan Lopardo, Jack & Janice Pellicano, who along with my oversight will plan and run all the meetings. Come join us! We have a lot of fun events planned!

In Christ,
Vicki Elfers
Lay Assistant to the Pastor

Personnel Committee

Personnel Committee Annual Meeting Report for 2023

The Personnel Committee is responsible for the employment process of the congregation and will write and oversee the contracts and duties of all church employees.

The Personnel Committee assisted with various issues for 2023:

- 1). Reviewed and updated the Staff Guidelines for 2023.
- 2). Worked with Director of the Preschool, AnneMarie Achatz, as she advertised, interviewed along with a member of Personnel, and hired individuals as needed by the Preschool for various positions needed for the Preschool in the roles of Teachers and Teacher Aids. Also hired several substitute aids to be activated as needed during the year.
- 3). Coordinated the retirement of Pastor Flora Hartford in June 2023. We thank Pastor Flora for all her leadership and guidance while she helped to Shepherd our congregation. We miss her immensely.
- 4). Established a new position to assist with the retirement of Pastor Hartford. The name of the position is Lay Person to the Pastor. Through discussion, Personnel decided on the best candidate for this position as Vicki Elfers who was our Parish Administrator. We interviewed her and recommended to Council that her job functions should be updated to the new position. The council agreed upon this update to be effective as of December 2023.
- 5). Oversaw all staff reviews. By the end of July 2023, all main staff were reviewed and given written feedback for their work performance in 2023. All preschool staff reviews were completed in May 2023.
- 6.) The committee also oversaw the process to hire a summer Camp Director. The committee assisted when needed when staff questions and other issues arose. Many thanks to all the members on the Personnel Committee for their time and insight while serving on this committee. It is very much appreciated. They are:
Pastor Justin Lathrop
Stephanie Holdcroft - Council Secretary
Madeline Sharrock - Council Vice President
Janet Anderson - Council Treasurer
Heidi Manzo - Member
Pattie Komornik – Personnel Administrator

Respectfully,

Pattie Komornik & Erica Barr

Personnel Administrator & Personnel Committee Chairperson, Council President

Preschool

Ascension Lutheran Preschool Annual Report for 2024

We had a great school year in 2023. As we look forward to 2024, we will continue our commitment to offer a quality program. We offer a safe and loving learning environment with hands-on experiences for the children. Ascension Preschool is a caring place for all of God's children.

Under the guidance of Ascensions' talented group of teachers, aides, and supportive staff we currently have 95 children enrolled in our various classes. We had an overwhelming demand for our 2-year-old program, so we opened another class. Some of our classes are filling up for the 2024/2025 school year with enrollment that started early January. We offer 2, 3, and 4-year-old classes as a ½ day program. Our current staff members are: Dawn Scheid, Tara Casucci, Kathy Fifield, Susan Quinn, Carol Marx, Terry DeBlasi, Sonja Milankovic, Denise Walker, Taylor Rivas, Kelly Levy, Jo-Ann Hegerman, Jill Jensen and Jillian Lospitalier.

This year we had a visit from the dentist, the fire department, hosted a wear your Pajamas/Pancake Breakfast Day, and Spring Fun Day with a petting zoo. We learned about apples, pumpkins, and fall during our fall harvest celebration. Along with those activities we had our big Thanksgiving Feast and Christmas Pageant. These activities really bring the school and families together. The parents and students both enjoy them equally. We shared a feast for Thanksgiving where the children all participated in "sharing" what they made in class. We concluded the year with the wonderful Christmas Pageant that told the story of Jesus' birth through songs by our "shepherd's", "Angels", "Lambs," and the Holy Family. The preschool would like to thank Anita Quynn for her continued assistance with playing the piano for our children to sing along to during the pageant.

Chapel with Pastor Justin, Pastor Flora, and Pastor Patty started in October with the stories of Creation and Noah's Ark. The children have continued to enjoy chapel by listening to the bible stories and they anticipate whose turn it will be to light the candles.

We have had a very busy year so far and look forward to 2024 and the activities we have planned. We are excited for another visit from the dentist, a Valentine's Day party, an Easter Egg Hunt, Pajama Day, Spring Fun Day and our Stepping Up, Moving Up and Graduation ceremonies in June.

I'd like to thank Pastor Justin, Pastor Flora, Pastor Patty, and the church staff for all their help through the year so far. I can't wait to see even more of the positive changes that will continue for the 2024 year.

Thank you,
AnneMarie Achatz
Preschool Director

Property Committee

“By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.” (Proverbs 24:3-4)

Ascension is God's house. It is the place where we come to worship, study, serve and interact with God and with each other. We have a beautiful sanctuary, and grounds, offices, classrooms, community room, gym (social hall) two parsonages. The property committee is tasked with overseeing it all with the continual help of the entire Church community. This responsibility consists of maintenance, repair and capital improvements.

2023 Property Committee Highlights

- Replaced Oil tanks that supported the Social Hall heating. Paid for by an anonymous donor
- Installed new gas furnace to replace failing oil furnace that heated the Library Lounge, Chapel and Community room.
 - Costs were offset thanks to all of the efforts by Jeff Ade, John Wern and several others
 - Donors have helped offset the remaining costs
- Continued managing of outdoor water pipes to prevent winter freeze
- Maintenance, start-up, winterizing of sprinkler systems (done by Eric Bertram)
- Maintenance done to repair mini-split systems that serve the offices
- Replaced some outdoor lighting
- Replaced several outlets throughout the church
- Set up a Crossing Guard volunteer sign-up for Sunday services
- Coordinated snow removal throughout winter – completely done by volunteers – a savings of about \$500/inch of snow

Looking ahead to 2024

- Finish gas furnace work with installing new thermostats in the Community Room and Library Lounge
- Continue coordination of snow removal volunteers
- Continue replacing older lighting with LED where possible

With the congregations continued support, our facilities will continue to serve God, our members and our community.

I would like to personally thank all of the committee members, Church Staff and all volunteers for their support and help over the past year.

Committee Members: Jeff Ade, John Wern, Eric Bertram, Rich Brown, Pastor Justin, and Property Chairman John Scheid.

Respectfully Submitted

John Scheid

Social Ministry

Social concerns 2023

Food Pantry: This year has seen an uptick in the number of food baskets distributed weekly. Currently we hand out about 5-6 baskets weekly however, there was a time this summer when we had to limit people to every 2 weeks in order to keep up our supply, Congregants are faithful in supplying donations weekly. Baskets are picked up on Tuesdays by those in need.

August project was to help “Hope for Youth in Amityville”, an organization that helps to Provide shelter, counseling and resources for children in foster care.

Our goal was to collect school supplies, backpacks, toiletries and luggage as requested For September.

Donations from parishioners included:

Cash -approx. \$261.00

Thrivent Action Card \$250. These funds were used to purchase Toiletries, 3 duffle bags and 12 prepackaged school supply kits from Amazon.

Donations of 3 suitcases, misc. Children clothing, backpacks, and toiletries

Total packs delivered to H f Y were;

15 backpacks, full of pens, pencils, paper, notebooks and misc school supplies

7 pkgs of prepacked school supplies

3 small suitcases, 2 duffle bags

Misc. toiletries, i.e. soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, moisturizer, deodorant

2 small infant carriers, children’s clothing, diapers

In addition, 6 full backpacks were given to Pastor Patty’s Latino family in need 2023.

SOCIAL CONCERNS REPORT NOV /Dec. 2023

Due to the generous outpouring from our members, Social Concerns was able to distribute approximately 20 food baskets, with gift cards for turkey/ham to families in need. In addition 21 bags with gift cards for children were given out at Christmas

Currently we are giving out 5-7 bags of food each week to people who come to the door.

Stephen Ministry

The mission of Stephen Ministry at Ascension is to:

- 1. connect people to God by providing distinctively Christian care to all people experiencing life's challenges and difficulties*
- 2. develop one on one relationships where mutual caring becomes a way of congregational life.*

Our entire Stephen Ministry team would like to thank Pastor Flora and Don for their faithful service to Stephen Ministry. When we made the decision in 2014 to bring Stephen Ministry back to Ascension, Pastor Flora and Don were right on board attending the leadership training in Orlando, Florida that year. Both Pastor Flora and Don helped teach all our classes. Pastor Flora served as our Referrals Coordinator for 8 years. Their time, dedication and faithful service to this ministry is a testimony to the success of this ministry. We will miss them both and wish them well in their retirement.

Our Stephen Ministry program continued to provide a listening ear to many in our congregation who were experiencing loss, change of life and various other life situations during 2023.

In the Fall we began meeting in person for Peer Supervision and began a series of classes designed to look back at important lessons and to now hear the lesson from the point of view of our experiences over the years.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in finding out more information about Stephen Ministry please speak to one of our Stephen Ministry Leaders or one of our Stephen Ministers, Jeff Adey, Marge Kroutil, Marie Marck, Pat Massaro or Cristina Parim.

In Christ,
Vicki Elfers, Stephen Ministry Leader
Pattie Komornik, Stephen Ministry Leader
Pastor Justin, Stephen Ministry Leader

Stewardship Committee

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT

The Stewardship Ministry began a new era in 2023. The devoted committee of 10 members began by examining a plan that would bring new opportunities for fellowship to the congregation. Our events not only brought people together, we designed them to be fundraisers to assist the Property Committee and General Budget. The events that took place this year were; Paint Night, Corn Hole Tournament, Murder Mystery Dinner, and our attempt to bring Caroling to the senior homebound members. Even though we had to cancel caroling due to severe weather, the seniors enjoyed a holiday visit and received a gift bag which they truly appreciated.

The Stewardship Ministry is committed to continue building fellowship, as well as heightening the dedication of the congregation in financial support. While this is a difficult topic, we understand the need for all of us to be good stewards of God's gifts. The committee looks forward to an active 2024. Here are just some of the events that will take place:

- A Karaoke dinner in early Spring.
- The committee will also be organizing a new "Online Directory" so we all have up to date information for all members. (A hard copy option will be available)
- The 2nd annual Paint Night with Janet Anderson.
- The 2nd annual Corn Hole Tournament
- Octoberfest Evening
- Christmas Caroling

The Stewardship Ministry Members: Janet & Rich German, Laura Conlon, Derek Lundquist, Owen Yung, Andrea & Sarah Bertram, and Carol & Tom Tresselt
We would like to thank Thrivent for their support by providing Action Cards to keep costs down.

Respectfully submitted,
Marie Marck - Chairperson

WELCA

“As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.”

In 2023, we continued our monthly meetings for the women of WELCA. About 20 women came together each month. Sharing in community, strengthened each member, helping raise the hopes and joys of each other and building up their spiritual growth.

There are currently 2 circles of WELCA women meeting:

Priscilla meets on the 1st Monday of the month

Lydia meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month

The WELCA circles continue their support of the churchwide expression of women of the ELCA through regular offerings. Whenever the Circles meet, it is customary for those in attendance to make a free-will offering.

The WELCA women join together to work on service projects. The WELCA Circles have donated:

\$150.00 to Deer Creek Baptist Church of Rolling Fork, MS to help with repairs due to a tornado.

\$100.00 to Ascension’s special need fund for the Latino Family Ministry.

\$100.00 toward Ascension’s new gas burner.

\$50.00 to Vicki for Christmas, as a thank you for all she does.

The Priscilla Circle hosted 2 coffee hours and made goodie bags to go home with the communion packets at Easter and Thanksgiving.

The Lydia Circle is committed to bringing in donations for the food pantry, hosted a coffee hour and donated \$70.00 to the Lutheran World Relief.

The WELCA Circles came together in September for a luncheon at Nona Bella’s restaurant in North Babylon. 20 women attended. They enjoyed Italian fare, shared fellowship and some laughs. As a reminder all women of Ascension Lutheran Church are welcome to join us as we continue to meet for fellowship, a chat and laughter, sharing Gods love for each other at Ascension Lutheran Church and the world around us.

The WELCA Circles mourn the loss of Marilyn Winans, Terry Riess, Mary Giustino and Carolyn Arcoleo, longtime friends and members of WELCA

Respectfully submitted, Anita Quynn and Pat Massaro

Worship and Music Committee

WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE – 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

“Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!” - Psalms 117

Gathering together to worship and praise God is a central part of our life as a community of faith here at Ascension. Our services are planned by the Pastors and the Director of Music Ministries, along with the Worship and Music Committee. Many additional members are involved in the planning, preparation, and leadership of our services each week. These include the Church office staff, bulletin folders, altar guides, assisting ministers, communion assistants, ushers and musicians.

We have continued in-person services and streaming simultaneously on both Facebook and YouTube. Our choirs performed on a regular basis in-person at the services, including the Praise Choir/Band, and having volunteers read the lessons. We distribute communion at the communion rail at our 9am service and having ushers collect the offering. In addition, Mark Eisemann continues to record background tracks for our Praise Service in order to enhance the music.

The children’s choir, bell choirs, string ensembles, praise choir, traditional choirs and brass ensemble performed live at our Christmas Eve Services. Our decision to offer two services on Christmas Eve was a success with both services almost full and the total number of parishioners exceeding last year’s.

We would like to thank the many volunteers that are involved in planning, preparation, and leadership of our services each week, with special thanks to Tom Tresselt, Derek Lundquist, Owen Yung, Glenn and Charlotte Perreira, Matthew and Michael Johnson, Peyton Barr and Nick Georghiou for all the help with keeping our live stream going.

Respectfully submitted,
John Wern – Committee Chair
Committee Members:

Pastor Justin, Pastor Patty, David Johnson, Thomas Tresselt, Lisa Perreira, Heidi Manzo, Nick Georghiou, Russ Bliss, Susan Bliss

Youth Committee

Kelly Reno
Youth Committee Chairperson

I am entering my second year as the chairperson and the youth committee is in full swing. We have held several fundraisers including; craft fair, White Post Farm pie sales, Blaze Pizza, banana bread sales, Chili Cook Off, Bingo Night and Trivia Night. Proceeds go towards youth attending the National Youth Gathering and also towards confirmation camp.

In addition to fundraising events we have also held many social events that include Bible studies, life lessons and just having fun together. Most recently Jean Belcher (Youth Director) organized a night to morning lock-in filled with a variety of activities. We have been organizing monthly youth events and sometimes even meet twice a month. Our group is thriving and we could not do it without the support of our committee members: Dawn Schied, Erica Barr, Stephanie Holcroft, Debbie DeMarchis, Jean Belcher (Youth Director) and Pastor Justin. We also extend our thanks to our parent volunteers and all church members for the continued support of our youth.

Thank you,
Kelly Reno

The year 2023 saw so much growth in our youth ministry program. I have been thrilled to work with everyone at Ascension to help build this important ministry.

During the winter months last year, we brought back several youth fundraisers such as BINGO Night, Trivia Night, and the famous Chili Cook-Off. All were so much fun and great events to bring our youth and congregation together!

We held an “at home” Confirmation Camp this summer with about 15 youth attending. The group participated in a variety of activities including a fishing trip out of Captree, a day serpent at Splish Splash, a night at the Beach, and so much more. There was fellowship and fun and relationship building all week long. Many thanks to the Confirmation Camp director David Johnson for all his planning, music, and hard work. Thanks to Pastor Justin for all his ministry during the week and a very special thank you to all the parent volunteers throughout the week who drove the kids

places and supported our leaders any way they could! You are all very much appreciated!

In the fall, we had 8 youth who received their Confirmation. What a blessing! We also began weekly Confirmation classes for those students in 6th and 7th grade. Our 8th graders are participating in a variety of volunteering activities including participating at the League of Yes baseball organization helping youngsters with special needs play the game and collecting coats for the Long Island Coalition for the Homeless.

Breakfast Bunch has also returned for the 23-24 year. Kelly Reno continues to oversee this important ministry, and we have opened this to include all our youth in 6 - 12 grades. They meet one Sunday a month for some breakfast, fellowship, and Bible study.

Our youth has had the opportunity to have some fun by participating in an overnight Lock-In in January, a Kindness Craze Challenge in February, a Minute to Win it game night in March, and a Welcome Back BBQ in September, open volleyball nights on Fridays, and an ax throwing night in December! We have also had several volunteering opportunities for our youth and their families such as our White Post Farms Fundraiser, our Craft Fair Fundraiser, and our Advent Festival. Many thanks to Janet Germann for organizing and overseeing the Craft Fair - what a tremendous amount of work and time, and we really appreciate everything!

We can't thank everyone enough who has supported this ministry through this year of growth. I would like to especially thank Kelly Reno, our Chairperson, Erica Barr, Stephanie Holdcroft, Dawn Scheid, Deb DeMarchis, and of course Pastor Justin for all their support and guidance throughout the year! We are looking forward to 2024 and lots of growth and fellowship for our Youth!

Respectfully submitted, Jean Belcher Youth Director Ascension Lutheran Church
jeanbelcheralc@gmail.com.

Proposed Budget for 2024

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH 2024 PROPOSED BUDGET

EXPENSE

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Defined Compensation	99,333.65
Payroll Taxes	5,703.19
Pension and Health	<u>52,184.00</u>
TOTAL	157,220.84

LAY ASSISTANT TO THE PASTOR

Defined Compensation	<u>55,000.00</u>
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LATINO MINISTRY

Mission Developer	15,000.00
Expenses	0.00
Less Grant Funding	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL	15,000.00

TOTAL PASTORAL MINISTRY	227,220.84
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WORSHIP

Director of Music Ministry	37,302.44
Music Ministry	800.00
Latino Musician	7,344.00
Praise Band	6,200.00
Nursery Aide	1,000.00
Payroll Taxes	<u>2,958.00</u>
TOTAL	55,604.44

ADMINISTRATION

Business Administrator	21,177.40
Maintenance Salary	8,000.00
Cleaning Service	31,000.00
Payroll Taxes	10,000.00
Payroll Service	4,800.00
Office Supplies	1,250.00
Copy Machines	5,500.00
Telephone/Internet	6,500.00
Postage	1,500.00
Miscellaneous	<u>2,000.00</u>
TOTAL	91,727.40

PROGRAM

Youth Director	20,400.00
Family Ministry Director	20,400.00
Payroll Taxes	3,121.00
Continuing Education	1,000.00
Christian Education	1,500.00
Youth Ministry	1,000.00
Confirmation Ministries	1,000.00
Communications(IT)	1,000.00
Evangelism	250.00
Stewardship	500.00
<u>Vanco</u> Direct Deposit Fees	2,100.00
Special Events	500.00
Adult Ministry	600.00
Synod Assembly	0.00
TOTAL	<u>53,371.00</u>

PROPERTY

Fuel	8,000.00
Heating and A/C Maintenance Contracts	500.00
Gas	7,500.00
Electric	10,000.00
Sanitation	4,680.00
Grounds Contract	10,000.00
Snow Removal	0.00
Water	1,500.00
Janitorial Supplies	1,500.00
Equipment	500.00
General Maintenance	4,000.00
Property Projects	3,000.00
Town Taxes	600.00
TOTAL	<u>51,780.00</u>

OTHER EXPENSES

Benevolence (Synod and other Outreach)	25,000.00
Insurance	40,000.00
Mortgage Expense	28,500.00
Lutheran High School	900.00
TOTAL	<u>94,400.00</u>

PRE-SCHOOL

Expenses	<u>200,000.00</u>
TOTAL	200,000.00

GRAND TOTAL **774,103.68**

INCOME

PLEDGES	410,000.00
(Envelope Offerings, loose offerings and Sunday School)	
SPECIAL OFFERINGS	
(Lent, Easter, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas)	20,000.00
OTHER INCOME	
(Rentals, Hall use, other donations and Thrivent Choice dollars)	70,000.00
PRE-SCHOOL INCOME	<u>270,000.00</u>
TOTAL PROJECTED INCOME	770,000.00
SURPLUS(DEFICIT)	(4,103.68)
% of income to Expenses	-0.0053%

BIOGRAPHIES FOR COUNCIL POSITIONS

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Jeff Adee: My name is Jeff Adee. My wife, Cathy, and I have been members of ascension for 6 or 7 years. Right now, I have been a Stephen Minister for almost 4 years and I'm an usher and assisting minister at services. I guess you could also call me the church woodworker, having made some of the church furnishings. I have been blessed with the time and some skills to help out at this church that I love so much.

Nominations to the Congregational Council 2024

The following persons are nominated to serve on the Congregational Council for 2024:

____ Jeff Adee(1st 2-year term)

____ Cathy Adee (3rd 2-year term)

____ John Wern (2nd 2-year term)

The following persons are nominated to serve a one-year term on the Congregational Council for 2024:

_____ Janet Anderson (Treasurer)

_____ Anna Rihani (Latino Ministry Representative)

_____ Pat Massaro (WELCA Representative)

Deacons

Recommendation: that **Susan Bliss'** call as a Synodical Deacon of Ascension Lutheran Church, Deer Park, N.Y. be extended for 2024

Susan will serve Ascension Church on a non-stipendiary basis. She will be accountable to and work under the supervision of the Senior Pastor

Serving as a Synodical Deacon at Ascension since April 2, 2016

Responsibilities for ministry include the following:

1. Prayer Group/Healing Ministry: leading prayer group twice monthly, healing service once a month and educational activities on prayer.
 2. Assisting on the Altar
 3. Scheduling of Worship Assistants
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Recommendation: that **Vicki Elfers'** call as a Synodical Deacon of Ascension Lutheran Church, Deer Park, N.Y. be extended for 2024.

Vicki will serve Ascension Church on a non-stipendiary basis. She will be accountable to and work under the supervision of the Senior Pastor

Serving as a Synodical Deacon since April 2, 2016.

Responsibilities for ministry include the following:

1. Serving as one of the leaders in Ascension's Stephen Ministry program and as a Stephen Minister.
2. Assisting on the Altar.

Responsibilities outside of Ascension:

1. Leading worship services at churches when no Supply Pastor is available.
2. A certified Spiritual Director

RESOLUTIONS

1. Be it resolved that we express our gratitude to God for the faithful service of those who have completed their terms on our Congregation Council and ask God to bless them in the days ahead:

John Scheid

We also lift up the current members of council for all their hard work and focus in helping to keep all our ministries working for the Glory of God.

2. Be it further resolved that we express our deepest appreciation to the current members of the church staff:

Leonel Avila Rich Brown Jessica DeCostanzo Vicki Elfers
David Johnson Mary Murphy

During this year we benefitted from additional staff members that we also want to express our gratitude to God for their work they provided during 2023:

Pastor John Krahn

Pastor Dennis O'Rourke

3. Be it further resolved that we express our deepest gratitude to the staff of Ascension Preschool:

AnnMarie Achatz Kathy Fifield Dawn Scheid Susan Quinn
Tara Casucci Theresa DeBlasi Kelly Levy Carol Marx
Sonja Milankovic. Denise Walker Taylor Rivas Jo-Ann Hegeman
Jillian Lospitalier Jill Jensen

4. Be it further resolved that we express our thanks to God for the many **volunteers** who serve Ascension. They make our congregation so vital.

5. Be it further resolved that we express our thanks to **Thrivent Financial and to our many members** for all the Action Team Card monies that were received that provided funds for various ministries at Ascension.

6. Finally, be it resolved that we thank God for our pastors:

Pastor Justin and Pastor Patty.